



Our response to the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care's report on Assistive Technologies & Home Modifications Scheme for In-Home Aged Care.

To the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care
Level 8, 595 Collins Street
Melbourne 3000
Via email to: SAH.implementation@health.gov.au

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The report on the Assistive Technologies & Home Modifications (AT-HM) Scheme for In-Home Aged Care presents an opportunity to create a more equitable framework for providing necessary living supports to older Australians who are excluded from participating in the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The Deafness Forum Australia is part of the *Assistive Technology for All Alliance*, a national partnership of peak consumer representatives and providers that represent and support millions of Australians with disability, their families, and carers. We commend the response by *Assistive Technology for All Alliance*. We wish to amplify some its key recommendations:

1. Further engagement is vital and it is particularly important that consumer representatives such as the Deafness Forum are engaged in meaningful conversations to ensure the AT-HM scheme attains equity, affordability and transparency.
 - small consumer representative organisations require specific funding and additional time to properly consult with their diverse and sometimes hard-to-reach populations.
2. The next stage in consultations should go to the level of attempting to specify the supports that would be included in a future AT-HM scheme, so that stakeholders can provide focussed inputs within their scope and expertise.
 - note the example given in the *Assistive Technology for All Alliance* paper of the absence of augmentative & alternate communication products and devices: communication devices and products are a recognised form of assistive technology, essential in providing aid to older Australians living with hearing challenges and complex communication needs.
 - the process of identifying reasonable and necessary supports should liaise closely with that of the National Disability Insurance Agency, which has spent 8 years developing its support lists in concert with numerous consumer representatives.

3. The next stage in consultations must also address proposed links and the means for coordinating the role of a new AT-HM scheme with existing relevant and related national and state/territory programs to avoid gaps and duplication.
 - such Commonwealth hearing health initiatives as, the Hearing Services Program voucher scheme and Community Service Obligation program, services offered by Hearing Australia, and the hearing services stream within the NDIS.

4. Stakeholder consultations can also address:
 - service delivery workforce qualifications, capability and capacity
 - quality and safeguards, including a complaints mechanism
 - role and rights of family/carers
 - digital accessibility

Thankyou for this opportunity to provide our initial thoughts and we look forward to continued engagement in the process.

Hearing health equity contributes to a better life

Over 70% of Australians aged over 70 have some hearing loss. This increases to around 85% in residential aged care.

Advancing health equity is a prerequisite for the wider participation in society of people with disability. By not receiving the required health services, such as rehabilitation and assistive technology, people may not be able to access livelihood opportunities, or participate in community life and society.



Deafness Forum Australia

Deafness Forum's mission is to make hearing health & wellbeing a national priority in Australia. It is the peak body representing the views and interests of the 4 million Australians who live with hearing loss, have ear or balance disorders, people who also communicate using Australian Sign Language, and their families and supporters.

[Deafness Forum Australia](https://deafnessforum.org.au) is the national hearing consumer peak body | Foundation Member of the WHO World Hearing Forum | Member of the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People | Associate Member of World Federation of the Deaf | Foundation Member of Australian Federation of Disability Organisations.

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